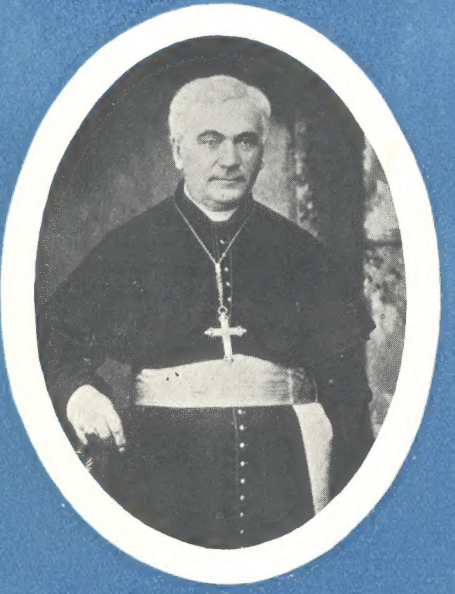
A NORTHERN APOSTLE



BISHOP V. GRANDIN

OBLATE OF MARY IMMACULATE

First bishop of St. Albert, Alberta, Canada, whose saintly death occurred on June 3rd, 1902

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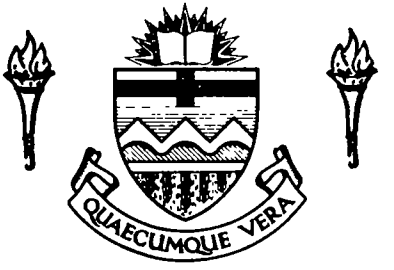

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souls, grant that his holiness may be manifest by the favor which I ask in his name, and that his heroic virtues may soon be glorified by Holy Church in the splendor of her worship.

Amen.

(100 days indulgence.)

† Henry Joseph, Archbishop of Edmonton.
September 30, 1929.

PRAYER

TO OBTAIN THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

O Jesus, strength and glory of Thy apostles, Who hast inflamed the heart of Thy missionary, Bishop VITAL GRANDIN, with an untiring zeal for the happiness of the most destitute and with a burning ardor for leading generous souls to a life of devotedness and sacrifice in the priestly and religious vocation, be Thou mindful of his toils, his sufferings, and his tears, all consecrated to Thy love, and in order to hasten his beatification, deign to manifest the power which he has in Thy sight by multiplying amongst us the number of fervent priests and religious willing to devote themselves to the heroism of the apostolate, and also by granting me the special grace which I now implore

And Thou, O sweet Mother, through thy Immaculate Heart, which thy Servant endeavored constantly to honor and imitate in its tender and passionate love for Jesus, and for the most neglected souls, grant that his holiness may be manifest by the favor which I ask in his name, and that his heroic virtues may soon be glorified by Holy Church in the splendor of her worship.

Amen.

(100 days indulgence.)

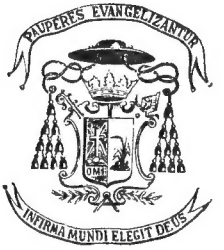
† Henry Joseph, Archbishop of Edmonton.
September 30, 1929.

A Northern Apostle

Bishop V. J. Grandin

OBLATE OF MARY IMMACULATE

First Bishop of St. Albert, Alberta, Canada,
whose saintly death occurred on
June 3rd, 1902.



"La Survivance" Printing Ltd.
Edmonton, Alta.
1936

Imprimatur

Edmonton, Alta., January 28, 1936

Archbishop's Residence,
Edmonton, Alberta.

I have read with a great deal of interest your sketch of the life of Bishop Grandin, and I feel that you have thrown into proper relief all the outstanding events in his saintly career. His early life, his seminary days, his years of priestly ministration, and finally the fruitful span of his episcopal labours, have been woven into a story that cannot but prove an inspiration to all who read it.

May I join to the ecclesiastical approbation of the proposed publication my sincere and prayerful wish, that this booklet may draw the people to a closer imitation of Bishop Grandin's many virtues, and that it may inspire in them a greater confidence in his power of intercession.

Wishing you every grace and blessing,

I remain,

Yours very faithfully in Xto,

Leo NELLIGAN,
Vicar-General

Cum permissu Superiorum

U. LANGLOIS, O.M.I.,
provincial.

DECLARATION

In obedience to the decree of Pope Urbain VIII, we hereby declare that all the statements made in this work are to be interpreted in a Catholic sense, and that, if we anywhere make use of such words as "saint" or "miraculous," it is with no intention of anticipating the judgement of the Catholic Church and the Apostolic See, to which in all things it is our duty and our happiness to be submissive.

BISHOP GRANDIN, O.M.I.

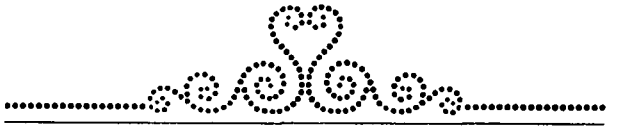
1829-1902

Infirma mundi elegit Deus.
[I Cor. I, 27]
"The weak things of this world hath God chosen." "God seems to delight in choosing that which, according to the world, is weak."
[Bishop Grandin's motto]

WHAT astounding marvels are the lives and the souls of the great servants of God! To begin to understand them one has to have strong faith. The reason for this lies in the fact that these chosen ones of God not only spurn the maxims and the spirit of the world, but are, in all things, guided by those of the Gospel which cause them to endeavour to submit their own will at all times to the holy will of the Master. To glorify God is their only aim; to cause Him to be served by others, their one and only ambition. Despite appearances to the contrary, life's struggle is brought to a happy close for them by a decisive victory—the only victory that truly matters; the victory that stands between a short lifetime of trials and tribulations and an eternity of bliss.

The foregoing brief lines might well serve to epitomize the life of one whose apostolic endeavours we are about to sketch.

Bishop Vital-Justin Grandin,
Titular Bishop of Satala.



FROM THE CRADLE TO THE ALTAR

1829-1854

THE ninth child of a family of fourteen, Vital-Justin GRANDIN was born at St-Pierre-la-Cour [now St-Pierre-sur-Orthe, diocese of Laval] on the eighth day of February, 1829. According to the laudable custom that obtained in the Grandin family, Vital was baptized the very day of his birth, and he was still but a child in his tender years when his good parents began to train him in the ways of piety.

It was then but natural that, as childhood merged into adolescence, Vital-Justin should show that he had been an apt pupil at the school of piety that was the Grandin household. Mr. Grandin, his father, not being blessed with much of the goods of this world, it was only by dint of hard labour and good management that he was able to feed and clothe his large family. But even out of his slender means, he managed to help others who were still less fortunate than he. That he used the things of earth in a manner that might one day merit for him an abiding-place in heaven is evident enough from the answer that he gave to his son Jean when the latter expressed his wish to become a priest "so as to give himself up to the good of souls:" "**Son**", said this

Christian parent, " **if I thought that you were being beckoned on to the priesthood by the prospect of possible wealth, emoluments and honour, my answer would be a decisive 'no;' but if your intention is to devote your life to the poor and lowly and unfortunate, I cannot but assure you that you have my heart's blessing. Go, we shall assist you to the full measure of our very limited means.**" But let us return to the future bishop of St. Albert.

Vital was nine years and a half old when he received for the first time his Eucharistic Lord. It was on that great day that he first felt the call of the Master to higher and nobler things. He too would be a priest. But, young as he was, he understood that the long years of preparation would mean added expense to his parents, who were already bending under too great a burden of it. Characteristically enough of the future Oblate, in order to relieve the situation at home, he accepted cheerfully to go to live with one of his uncles to herd sheep. And what a pious and dutiful shepherd boy he was! While his flock grazed he numbered his beads, meditated on the lives of the saints, or just let the sight of nature in all its summer beauty lift his heart and his soul to God.

Nevertheless, Vital ceased not to hear the voice of the prototype of all priests calling, calling. At times the call was faint; again it became compelling. All that seemed to stand between the boy and the attainment of his most cherished wish was the thought of the extra sacrifices it would impose on his beloved parents. One cannot but notice here again another trait of the future bishop: a tender regard for the feelings of others, even

in presence of a duty to be fulfilled. Vital thought for a while that he had found a solution to this vexed problem by joining a teaching brotherhood—the Brothers of the Holy Cross. But, strange as it may seem, he who for long, long years was to have to face the wintry blasts in the frozen north, was not found physically fit to follow the calling of a teaching Brother in the temperate climate of sunny France. So, Vital Grandin returned sorrowful to his native heath.

Back home, the youth, by devoting his time to the monotonous tasks of the farm, vainly tried to convince himself that the call to the altar was not for him; but the voice of God, and of God's own children, would not be hushed. The forces that contented within him, however, could not remain hidden from the watchful eye of his mother. She who bore that blessed name had long since felt that Vital was no ordinary child. Once she asked him directly what it was that caused him so much sorrow.

"It is just that I want to be a priest", replied Vital, **"but you and Father are so poor that I did not feel like telling you."**

"Son", replied the stout-hearted mother, **"do you not know that God will come to our aid? When your brother went into training, we did not know how long it would be before he would have to discontinue, and now he is all but ready for ordination. Go to see the priest and ask him to begin to teach you Latin."**

Without delay Vital, under the tutelage of the abbé, began his course of studies. The Good Lord, no doubt, beheld with a kindly eye this future apostle, who wanted nothing more than a slender opportunity in

order to fit himself for his chosen task. The mother had been right: **"le bon Dieu nous aidera,"** (God will help us) she had said. And God did help. That help came most unexpectedly, Abbé Sébaux being chief among the instrumental causes. This man of God had no misgivings as to the vocation of his youthful friend. However, a defect of speech which he had noticed in young Grandin, he considered as being of sufficient moment to cause him to consult his superior, the good and saintly Bishop Bouvier. Accordingly, one day the took Vital to see him.

"Do you really love the Good Master," asked his Lordship. **"Do you think of him occasionally?"**

"Sometimes I do not," replied Vital with delightful simplicity.

"You wish to become a priest—a good priest?" rejoined the Bishop.

"That is my one and only wish, my Lord," came the eager reply.

"Splendid," said the Bishop, **"a good priest, and your impediment of speech will do no harm."**

In the sequel of our story, we shall see that this very impediment actually assisted in carrying out the designs of God on his faithful servant.

This difficulty disposed of, the pious Abbé Sébaux enrolled Vital GRANDIN in the Minor Seminary of Précigné. Four years passed. Vital, despite his constantly recurring ill health, had been a diligent student. One important stage of his training was over. His record had been among the best. The Superior had written this testimony of him: **"Vital Grandin has proved himself to be an exemplary student, ever faithful to**

duty, everywhere in the lead both in personal application and good example. It is not surprising that he is esteemed and loved both by the masters and pupils of the institution."

Vital was now ready to begin his course in sacred theology. The Seminary of **Le Mans** was ready to receive him. For the first time the young man seemed in a state of doubt. But the uncertainty had nothing to do with his calling. It had, however, much to do with the manner in which he should respond to it. Would it be as a diocesan priest in his native France, or would he go to foreign lands where the fields were indeed, "white with the harvest?" For some time he had felt a strange yearning for labour in the **Foreign Missions.** So far, not being sure whence proceeded this attraction, he had spoken of it to no one. Was it a call from God or was it merely a passing fancy? It was his friend and benefactor Abbé Sébaux who again came to the rescue. He opened the New Testament and, from the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians read a few passages from it, and added: **"My dear boy, I hope that you will be a missionary. Who knows? Perhaps you may join an order of missionaries. Do you know that it is among the weak and the humble that God finds his most doughty champions? Infirma mundi elegit Deus... Your vocation will have time to mature during your year in philosophy."**

Accordingly, in October 1850, Vital Grandin entered the Senior Seminary at Le Mans. He stayed but one year—merely enough time to dispose himself and to prepare his beloved ones, for the great sacrifice that God was about to require of all of them.

September 1851 found the young levite at the Seminary of the **Foreign Missions** in Paris. Here again, as at Précigné, Vital GRANDIN became a general favourite. But, strange as it may seem, this renowned institution was but another stepping-stone to the final goal. His old defect of speech—so decided his new superiors—stood in the way of his acquiring a practical knowledge of the oriental languages. So, despite their very deep regret to ask Vital to withdraw, they did ask him to try again the Seminary at Le Mans, or, again, should he so desire, to request admission into one or other of the many missionary societies that were, at that time, so much in need of candidates As luck—or should we say Providence?—would have it, it so fell out that young Abbé GRANDIN had heard of late much concerning a new religious family, **the Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate.** On the advice of his confessor, he asked and obtained admission to this order that was destined to figure in some of the most glorious pages of modern church history.

This happened in 1851. On the twenty-eighth of December of that year, at the Oblate novitiate of Notre-Dame de l'Osier, Vital-Justin GRANDIN was invested with that habit that since has been worn by saints of God from the frozen, barren wastes beyond the Artic circle of northern Canada to the burning plateaus of Ceylon. It was with joy, not unalloyed with diffidence, that he wore it. His old impediment of speech still stood in the way—at least, so he thought. When, however, he was assured that such a drawback would not only be entirely overlooked, but that he would be allowed to make his vows as an Oblate, his joy knew no bounds. It

was on New Year's Day 1853 that Vital-Justin GRANDIN pronounced his perpetual vows in the Missionary Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

On this occasion he wrote to his brother, Abbé Jean, these more than significant words·

> **"I have but two weeks to prepare for my final 'oblation;' I hope that it will be on New Year's Day that I shall have the privilege of consecrating myself entirely to God. On the day that the Redeemer of mankind was given the holy name of Jesus, the day on which He paid the earnest of our redemption, I shall be privileged to receive the appellation of "OBLATE OF MARY IMMACULATE." For the salvation of souls, I ALSO SHOULD BE A VICTIM without reserve. You can have no notion of my happiness . . . Nevertheless, at times, great fear comes over me at the thought of the new and heavy obligations I am about to contract. The very name of "OBLATE" which I shall assume is significant enough. I should be willing to consider myself A PERPETUAL VICTIM and to ORDER my life accordingly. This truth will be bought home to me at every moment by the sight of the CRUCIFIX that I shall wear. It will constantly remind me that the life of an Oblate of Mary Immaculate should be one of intense self-denial and self-immolation, so to speak. So far our congregation has had no martyrs. IF ONLY I COULD BE FOUND WORTHY TO BE THE FIRST OBLATE MAR-**

TYR, WHAT A JOY IT SHOULD BE FOR ME, my beloved brother, and what an honour for you."

Brother GRANDIN'S novitiate had reached its term; his consecration to God had been made in full harmony with the lines we have just read, and the next step towards the altar was immediately taken. Thus we find him studying sacred theology at Marseilles in immediate preparation for ordination. At last, the long-looked for day dawned, and it was from the blessed hands of the great Founder of the Congregation, Bishop de Mazenod, that he received on the 23rd of April 1854 that which made him "a priest forever."

Father GRANDIN was ready to set sail from his beloved France with the limitless prairies of the Canadian West as his destination. There the dusky children of the Plains were calling for more missionaries to tell them the story of Big Brother, and teach them how to observe His law. And this young missionary, with the mighty soul in a frail body, was to be instrumental in causing the name of Jesus to be revered in the most remote recesses of these erstwhile northern vastnesses.

THE MISSIONARY PRIEST

1854-1859

WITH the blessings and words of encouragement of his friend and protector, Abbé Sébaux, and also with the loving and prayerful wishes of his father—his brave-hearted mother had gone to her reward —Father GRANDIN set out for Canada. The renowned shrine of Our Lady of Ransom in Normandy lay on his road of travel. At the feet of the Virgin Mother, the young missionary prayed long and fervently. The burden of his supplication, as he himself informs, was "to ask of this Good Mother the strength and courage of which he stood so much in need." Having reached Hâvre, he again betook himself to Mary's shrine to again place his work under her powerful protection. His brother, Abbé Jean, had come with him; and here the two brothers, with mutual blessings, and deep emotion took leave of each other. In a few hours the young priest's eyes gazed lovingly on the fast receding shores of France, as the ship that bore him westward heaved and tossed on the restless bosom of the mighty Atlantic.

After months of weary travel Father GRANDIN, with the ocean and over half a continent between him and his loved ones, reached St. Boniface in August. There he remained for nine months preparing himself for that mission which lay somewhere beyond the north

western horizon. His superior, Bishop Taché, another Oblate, had not yet informed him just what or where that mission might be. One day in the spring, the Bishop called him and told him that he was sending him to the **Nativity** Mission, which lay many, many hundred miles away, on the shores of Lake Athabaska. Accordingly, on the 5th of June 1855, he started up the Red River, leaving behind him only friends and admirers; for, as Bishop Taché wrote, "though the young priest was with them but for a short while, he had wormed himself into every heart."

On his way to far-off Athabaska, Father GRANDIN stopped for a brief spell at **Ile-à-la-Crosse**, to which mission he was soon to return.

It was the beginning of August before the primitive craft that bore him reached Fort Chipewayan (Lake Athabaska), where three of his fellow Oblates, whose names are inseparably linked with the history of the North, awaited him; they were Fathers **Faraud**, and **Grollier**, and Brother **Alexis Reynard**. His contact with these great and holy missionaries had much to do with making him, in a short time, a thorough missionary.

Father GRANDIN soon acquired a strange, but beneficent, influence over the Indians placed in his charge. These crude children of Nature yielded at once to that combination of personal holiness and goodness of heart which were the outstanding characteristics of this man of God. His first conquests were the **Crees** and the **Montagnais** of Lake Athabaska. Many were the tribes that in after years were to open their simple minds and hearts to his benign influence. With the directness and simplicity that were among the peculiar

traits of the plainsmen, one of them said to him one day: **"The God whom you preach must be good indeed, since you yourself are so good."**

But Father GRANDIN was to remain only two years at **Nativity** Mission. In September 1857, at the urgent behest of Bishop Taché, he betook himself with great haste to **Ile-à-la-Crosse**, where all was not well among those who, but lately, had embraced Christianity.

Realizing that immediate action was imperative, if the ground already gained were not to be lost, the young Oblate began by preaching a mission. Therein he displayed his excellent qualities of head and heart. Very soon the little divided and discontented mission had resumed its former atmosphere of peace and Christian harmony.

And so the missionary was going from one apostolic triumph to another when to his northern home came disquieting news—news that was going to shape his life in a manner he had never even dreamed of. He had been named by the Pope Bishop of **Satala** and coadjutor bishop to Bishop Taché, with the right of succession. With a diocese territorially half the size of Europe, the good bishop of St. Boniface had long felt that he could not carry on single-handed. Father GRANDIN, though only twenty-eight years of age, would be an admirable choice, thought he. His opinion was concurred in by the other bishops of Canada and by the Founder, Bishop de Mazenod. Finally, the choice was approved by the Holy See on December 11, 1857.

When then, in July 1858, the news of his appointment reached him, the humble missionary could not at first believe it. When the full reality dawned upon him

he was overwhelmed. Writing to his Superior General, Bishop de Mazenod, he enlarged upon those things which, to his way of thinking, should make him both unworthy of such a high office and quite incapable of filing it. His youth, his ignorance, his unstable health, and what not, were in turn dwelt upon. He felt certain that, once made aware of all his shortcomings, his superiors would at once revoke the appointment. The opposite, however, was the effect of his expressions of self-abasement: more than ever they were convinced that he was their best choice.

A formal order from Bishop de Mazenod, which reached Father GRANDIN by the slow prairie mail in February 1859, put an end to further discussion of the matter. This order told the bishop-elect to set out at once for Marseilles, where the ceremonies of the consecration would be held. Needless to add that these proceedings met with the full approval of Bishop Taché.

In obedience to authority, the humble GRANDIN bowed. He was consecrated at Marseilles on November 30, 1859. Thoughts that were uppermost in the minds of those who had watched the unfolding of the imposing rites that morning are well summed up in the diary entry of Bishop de Mazenod, of the same date. We read:

> "This has been one of the loveliest days of my life. I have given episcopal consecration to our **good, holy and most excellent Father GRANDIN.** How delighted I am that Bishop Taché and I have made this choice. How charming is his simplicity! What love and loyalty he shows for the Congregation, his spiritual mother! How willingly he has given up all that was dear to

him! And what a kind heart is his! In a word, what boundless devotedness to his work fills his soul!"

This overwhelming joy of the ageing consecrating bishop was fully equalled by the feelings of intense gratitude and humility of him who was probably the youngest bishop of his day—the newly-consecrated Bishop GRANDIN. Let us read a few of the thoughts that he that day committed to writing:

"Man struggles and strives, but God leads him on. . . **Quid retribuam Domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi?** . . The least I can do is to have great confidence, and to submit myself in all things to God's holy will. . . I feel from experience that the most painful happenings of my life have been but the effects of the goodness of God. . . **Infirma mundi elegit Deus.** These are the very words that settled me in my calling. . . Who could have foreseen how fully their meaning would be borne out in real life?"

The inermost soul of Bishop GRANDIN stands fully revealed in the choice which he made of his episcopal coat-of-arms. He compares himself to a bending reed, symbol of weakness, but bending towards the cross in which he is assured of light and strength. The motto below epitomizes his own life story: **"Infirma mundi elegit Deus."** (The weak things of earth hath God chosen).

The second cathedral of St. Albert

The third bishop's residence, 1890

THE BISHOP

1860-1902

WITH a caravan of ardent apostolic young Oblates Bishop Grandin returned to St. Boniface in July 1860. They were received in the city of the "turrets twain" with all the enthusiasm that the occasion called for. Great was the joy of the good people at the turn that events religious and ecclesiastical had taken. What shall we say of the joy of the Chief Pastor, Bishop Taché? Had that great and saintly prelate been able to peer into the future no doubt but that his joy would have been overflowing He whose return had occasioned such jubilation was going to be his co-adjutor and friend for twelve years, and Bishop of St. Albert for thirty. The following pages must, of necessity, be but the barest outline of the fruitful career of this, the first bishop of the North.

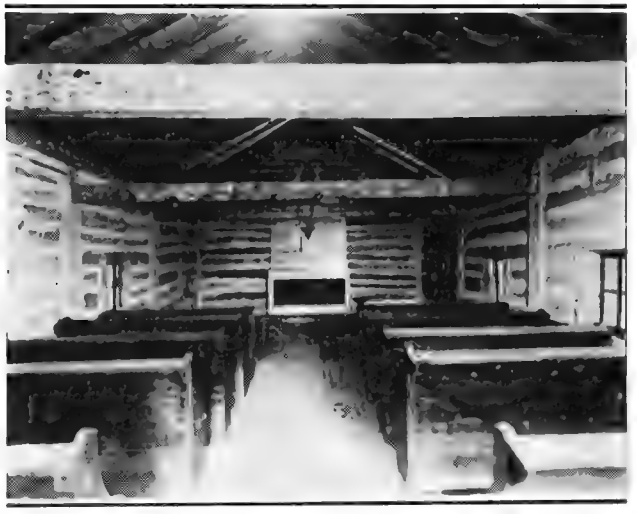
THE CO-ADJUTOR

1860-1872

It was characteristic of Bishop Taché that, as soon as he had secured one gain, he cast about for its logical sequence. He now had a pious and learned young co-adjutor. Why not extend the bounds of the Kingdom and hasten the day of the Master's coming to parts that hitherto had not known Him? The "Great White

The first cathedral of St. Albert

It was upon leaving this hallowed spot that the chief envoy of France to Canada exclaimed: "I have beheld the most beautiful cathedral in the world."



Inside the first cathedral

Second bishop's residence

Second cathedral 1st school and 1st convent occupied by the Grey Nuns

Third bishop's residence

ST. ALBERT IN 1886

North" of the valley of the Mackenzie might well be cut off from St. Boniface, to form a vicariate-apostolic under Father **Faraud,** O.M.I. Both bishops being at one on this project, each undertook to bring it to a happy fruition. Bishop Taché would attend to negotiations with Rome, while Bishop GRANDIN would study out details in the North.

Thus the first assignment of the future "Saint of Saint Albert" was an almost fabulous trip into the Far North. It took him three years, 1861 to 1864. During these truly heroic journeyings, God alone knows the sufferings, privations, and humiliations endured by this lover of souls. The heroic courage with which he endured the one physical inconvenience of the filth of his surroundings in native lodges has gained for him the rather incongruous title of "l'Evêque Pouilleux" (the bishop covered with vermin). Only those who have taken the trouble to study the fine fibre of the mind and heart of Bishop GRANDIN can fully appreciate—or can they?—how much he suffered from the sordid conditions under which, for the love of souls, he had to live. Like another Benedict Joseph Labre, he bore with all. With his mind fixed on higher values, the things of bodily comfort mattered little. With no other means of transportation than his dog-sleds, drawn by his trusty huskies, Bishop GRANDIN went from mission to mission. When the shadows of an early northern night fell, to keep from freezing, he, the carefully-reared son of France, often shared his humble tent with them. He had nothing to gain in cleanliness in asking for lodging with the Indians among whom his lot was cast: there the filth beggared description.

And so "l'Evêque Pouilleux," often sleeping on a bed of snow, or on the frozen surface of river or lake, carried the "good news" to these forgotten ones. In turn, **Crees, Montagnais, Dogribs, Yellow-Knives, Rabbit Skins, and Cross-eyed (Loucheux)** Indians heard his words. On he went encouraging and blessing the few missionaries whom he met along his extended course. Here he built a new "mission;" there he gave a new lease of life to an old one. Providence, which was to be the see of a future bishop, thus came into being. Like the Apostle of the Gentiles, in season, and out of season, he constantly saw his life in danger in order that souls might be saved. Such was the life of Bishop Grandin during these three heroic years—a life of heroism that has rarely been equalled in the epic whose main theme is the quest for souls.

When the Bishop of Anemour, the newly-consecrated Bishop **Faraud,** came to take over his duties as Vicar-Apostolic of Athabaska-Mackenzie, Bishop GRANDIN had "prepared the way before him" in very deed.

Having returned, then, from the northern missions to **Saint-Jean-Baptiste,** the Bishop of Satala had every reason to take a well-deserved rest. But rest, in the ordinary sense of that word, is not for souls of the GRANDIN mould. He had heard that the Fathers at **Lac Caribou** had had much to contend with. To them, therefore, he wends his way, bearing with him words of consolation and encouragement. His trip thither had not been an easy one. He arrived among them worn out with hunger and fatigue. To him, that was of little moment. Their troubles and privations were all that mattered. His report to the Superior General of his

visitation fully reveals his compassion for his suffering Oblate brothers. The four hardest months of the winter of 1866-67, with their hardships, will ever be associated in the minds of his biographers with this mission of brotherly love.

Then the wandering missionary returned to **l'Ile-à-la-Crosse.** If he had not visions of a period of restfulness, at least he must have rejoiced at the thought of a more ordered existence than that to which he had been accustomed for some years. Such hopes, however were not to be realized. Trials seemed to dog the work of his confrères. This time the demon of fire was to destroy the work which had cost so much hard labour and so many harder privations. On the evening of the first of March 1867, his residence, which Brother Bowes had just enlarged by adding a wing to shelter the many children that had been placed under the loving care of the Grey Nuns, was totally destroyed by fire. Nothing was saved. The loss was crushing indeed. However, the disaster was not without its compensations. Right while the fire was at its worst, the good bishop prayed, and, behold the wind, which had threatened to carry the destructive element to the adjoining church and convent, suddenly veered and these precious buildings were saved. Besides this not one life was lost. The saintly prelate recalled that trials are the hall-mark, and often the reward, of God's work and of those that do it. It was therefore, with heart full of gratitude that he took his little flock to the church, where he led in a solemn hymn of thanksgiving—"**Te Deum laudamus!**" His next step was to set out for France where, he was confident, the good people with their traditions of unbounded

generosity for foreign missions, would supply him the wherewith to rebuild the ruined edifice.

Bishop GRANDIN was accompanied on his trip to Europe by Bishop Taché. In spite of the deep attachment of this latter for his co-adjutor, he asked the Sovereign Pontiff to again divide the diocese of St. Boniface. It was still too extensive. Bishop Grandin could be placed over the northwestern portion, that is to say, that territory about English River, or Churchill, and the Saskatchewan country. This combined area would give him a diocese twice as large as France. At the time, negotiations along these lines were entered upon, but it was only later that they were brought to a happy conclusion. When the Bishop returned, he fixed his abode—insofar as a wandering prelate could be said to have a fixed abode—not at Ile-à-la-Crosse, but at what since has become "Historic St. Albert," on the Sturgeon River, some nine miles from Fort Edmonton. It is now a sacred spot—a holy hill—hallowed by the blessed remains of prelates, priests and lay brothers,—some of them martyrs. All of them gave their lives for the greatest cause that they knew. to make the name of Jesus known and loved among those who hitherto had not even heard of it.

THE BISHOP OF ST. ALBERT
1872-1902

We have now come to the last great turning-point in the life of a truly great man. The same "brief" that made the diocese of St. Boniface an archdiocese, and its distinguished incumbent an archbishop, erected a new see at St. Albert with Bishop GRANDIN as first

Ordinary. This "brief" was dated September 22, 1871. It reached Bishop **GRANDIN**, however, only on April 2, 1872.

On receiving this order from the Holy Father—for an order he took it to be—the Bishop of St Albert, characteristically enough of an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, performed his first official act, which was the consecration of his new diocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to Our Lady of Victories This done, Bishop **GRANDIN** set to work with such earnestness that one would imagine that, up to this time, he had done nothing in the mission fields.

The travels of the Apostle of the Nations, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, make one marvel at the zeal of one who has fully grasped what it really means to win souls to Christ. Those of the Bishop of St. Albert recall some of the finest and most heroic episodes of this first chapter of the history of God's Church. From St. Albert to Lac Caribou, and points in between; ther from the same starting-point to the present borders of Montana, through the Blackfoot country, and back again to St. Albert, travelled the saintly Oblate. Some times he travelled by carts of the crude Red River type; again he went by canoe; at other times he went from mission to mission on horseback. Regardless of personal inconvenience, the Bishop always chose that means of locomotion that made the smallest inroads into his slender purse. Who will tell how many thousands of miles he thus travelled up and down the prairies in search of souls! Only the Master whom he served knows the sufferings and privations he endured that he might bring

these simple children of Nature to the feet of the Redeemer. His sufferings ran the full gamut of miseries from the relentless grasp of the Frost King to the unspeakable discomfort caused by the poisoned bites of the millions of gnats and mosquitoes that infest the prairies during the scorching western summer. But these, added to the hunger, that was more often present than absent, were as nothing compared with the one real privation he had to endure: that of often being unable either to offer up the Holy Safrifice or recite the Divine Office, or to spend, as had been his wont, long hours in the presence of his Eucharistic Lord. When these great joys of his saintly soul would lie beyond his reach, he tried to make up for them by often telling his beads as he travelled from place to place. **"My God"**, he once was heard to exclaim, **"how tired I am of these ceaseless wanderings! How much I would love to rest my weary limbs if, for one such as I, rest could be taken without detriment to duty!"** Let it be noted in passing, that it has been estimated that, during his missionary career, Bishop **GRANDIN'S** travels aggregated eight or nine times the circumference of the globe.

In the vast expanse that was the diocese of St. Albert in 1872 there were but five mission houses. Besides the St. Albert Mission, which was also the bishop's see, there were Lake Ste-Anne, and St-Paul-des-Cris in the Saskatchewan Country, with those of Ile-à-la-Crosse and Lac Caribou in the English River District. The missions at Lac La Biche and of Lesser Slave Lake, which canonically belonged to St. Albert, had been placed, for the time being, under the juris-

diction of Bishop Faraud. From each of these mission houses the Fathers went hither and yon wherever the good of souls called them. Some of these outposts lay at distances of fifty, a hundred, or even two hundred miles away. St. Joachim, at Fort Edmonton, was served from St. Albert: the whole diocese was composed of a dozen of priests and a few lay brothers. Besides these, in the nearby building that served the purpose of both school and hospital, a number of Sisters of Charity, known as Grey Nuns from Montreal, carried on the work of their admirable calling. An institution, similar to this, and also under the Grey Nuns, was also to be found at Ile-à-la-Crosse.

Soon, however, the burning zeal of the missionary bishop brought many other institutions into being. Men as well as means were lacking, but the man of God, while using every means that human ingenuity could suggest, always fell back on Providence. What struggles he had to wage, at times, both with rival missionary bands and with those whose duty it was to see that even-handed justice be dispensed to the scattered settlements of these parts. At times, both men and the very elements seemed to conspire against him. Some of his beloved missionaries came to an untimely end in the furious waters of rivers at their flood; others met their death at the hands of infuriated savages; others, still, breathed their last in the frozen, barren wastes, without anyone at hand to soothe their parting. Some of the mission houses that he had built with his slender means became the prey of the devouring flames. Supplies of food, clothing, chapel supplies were lost in the swirling northern rivers. These, added to frequent crop failures, with consequent

shortages of food, more than once filled to overflowing the cup of sorrow of the good bishop. Perhaps the worst trial of all awaited him when the hopes that he had fostered for an acceptable solution to the school question of the Northwest Territories were dashed to pieces, at a time when the false promises that had been made to him appeared in their true light.

But, under the watchful eye of the Pastor, the work of God continued to grow and to expand. By 1890 the diocese of St Albert boasted thirty-six missionary centres, served by no fewer than forty-six Oblate missionnaries. It was gratifying to note that Christianity had struck deepest roots in those places that had known it for the greatest number of years. In villages that had hitherto remained outside the fold, the sign of our salvation was seen to lift its head above the primitive lodges of the natives. In the schools and orphan homes, that soon appeared here and there throughout the West, and that were entrusted to the loving and intelligent care of the Grey Nuns and the Faithful Companions of Jesus, the superiority of the Catholic missionary units became apparent to all. To complete these units, inasmuch as his means allowed, the apostolic **GRANDIN** began the erection of hospitals wherein the sick and poor and aged were cared for. How all these centres of intellectual and spiritual life and solace for every misery were made possible, in a land where every element that went into them was missing, is a question that only the all-seeing God can answer

What once had been the diocese of St. Boniface had already been divided twice. A new partition was now in sight. It took place in 1891, when the diocese of Prince

Albert was created. In withdrawing the Churchill country from St. Albert, there still remained to this latter a territory as large as the whole of France.

* *

But times were changing. White colonists, not only from Eastern Canada and the United States, but also from the "old countries" were beginning to pour into the West by trainloads. Parishes, besides mission houses, now became a necessity, if these new-comers were to be saved to the Church. Cities grew up. Edmonton and Calgary were among the first. The grand old Oblate missionary band, despite their marvelous devotedness, no longer could cope with the requirements. They were the first to recognize this, and to realize that a call must be sent out to other orders and to the diocesan priesthood of the East.

Old age was now overtaking the Bishop of St. Albert All his life he had suffered patiently from ailings that had threatened him in early manhood. The marvel of it all was that he was still alive. But even heroism has its limitations, and it became evident that he needed a coadjutor. Accordingly, Father **Legal**, a brother Oblate of outstanding merit, was chosen for this high office, and was consecrated at St. Albert on June 17, 1897. This done, the saintly bishop seemed to turn from the things of this world to think only of the Great Beyond. During the remaining five years of this life he suffered and prayed as only the saints of God know how. When his hour came, with that holy joy that must be the reward of a well-spent life, he was able to bequeath to his successor a truly magnificent legacy. This legacy was the well-

organized diocese of St. Albert which, for administrative purposes, Bishop **GRANDIN** had divided into five districts: St. Albert, Edmonton, Calgary, Saddle Lake, and the Blackfoot Country. In the last-named region, where conversions to Christianity had been extremely rare, there seemed, at last, some hope of a change for the better. Two of the leading chiefs had been received into the Church. Disregarding their unresponsiveness, the Bishop had endowed the Blackfeet with a hospital and three schools, one of which was an industrial school. But among the many institutions that owed their origin to the zeal and initiative of Bishop **GRANDIN**, none was dearer to his priestly heart than the diocesan seminary. Two years and a half before he answered the final call, he had the great joy of seeing the dream of his episcopate become a living reality. It was on January 21, 1900, that he himself presided over its inaugural ceremonies.

Thus had been re-enacted at St. Albert, one of the most beautiful episodes of the public life of the Master: "And leaving the city of Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capharnaum on the sea coast that it might be fulfilled which was said by Isaias the prophet: the people that sat in darkness hath seen great light: and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death, light is sprung up. (St. Matt. IV, 13-16).

That light has never dimmed to this day: its rays shine with ever-increasing splendour. Enlightened by it, let us, through the perspective of the years, learn something of the virtues of the religious, the missionary, the bishop, that his contemporaries were allowed to gaze upon and admire while he still trod the thorny paths of a missionary of the western plains.

VIRTUE AS PRACTICED BY A GREAT SERVANT OF GOD

And first let us gaze upon the sweet virtue of **humility** one of the many in which the first Bishop of St. Albert excelled. To this true follower of the Humble Nazarene, nothing was quite so irksome as honor and applause. The older he became, and the more he grew in the esteem of men, the more he looked upon his own unworthiness. He thanked God for his lowly birth; thanked Him, above all, for having sent him to preach the word of God to the poor and destitute.

To a high degree Bishop Grandin possessed the spirit of **poverty.** The conditions under which he passed his life, from the cradle to the grave, saw to it that he would be afforded every occasion for practicing it. Deprived throughout his long years of work in the Master's service of almost all bodily comfort, living on the coarsest food, wearing only such garments as the poor can afford, our saintly bishop was poor in very deed "I am poor and in labours from my youth", said the prophet concerning the Redeemer. Jesus died divested of all. His servant, Bishop Grandin, when "Sister Death" bade him come home, was as poor as his Master: not a single thing could he claim as his own. His destitution was such at times that the very savages among whom he wrought were scandalized at it.

But this man of God, who was both meek and poor, possessed great **strength** of soul, where the glory of God and the salvation of souls were at stake. Nowhere, however, did he show so much fortitude as in those things that made for his advancement in Christian and reli-

gious perfection. Next, in order of importance, stood the struggles he had to wage for the spiritual welfare of his dear Indians. It was in the all-important question of the Indian Schools that this far-seeing apostle was willing to face the greatest odds, in order to protect the faith of the children of those whom he had won to God. Need we mention his fortitude of soul in presence of the hundred and one personal privations he had to encounter in this country that lacked everything that we are wont to associate with the rudimentary comforts of life? Only the Master Himself, from whose all-seeing eye nothing escapes, could adequately estimate his score of merits in this, as well as in a thousand other instances.

Bishop Grandin's **faith!** What was his entire life but a sublime act of that virtue? With the faith of a child he went straight to God, his Father and Lord. Nor was he content to possess this priceless treasure: he wanted others to know it and to cherish it. How many vocations had their inception in the revealing faith of this great apostle! Like other saints, Bishop Grandin's faith led him to find repose in frequent, not to say constant, union with his Maker.

Hope is the sister of faith. For one who looked upon things of this earth as so many trifles, unworthy of notice, the virtue of hope was all but natural. His motto, "Infirma mundi " which we have already noticed, shows what little value he set on his own efforts. Like the Apostle of the nations, so great was his confidence in God that nothing—sufferings, illness, trials, difficulties —could weaken it.

With one who possessed the virtues already mentioned to such an eminent degree, it is not surprising

that sweet charity reigned supreme. St. John Chrysostom had written: "The hearts of the saints are unspeakably mild, compassionate and kind." Such was the heart of Bishop Grandin. Those who knew him in life are at one in saying that his outstanding characteristic was that very kindness, with which nature had endowed him, but which grace had transformed into a rare supernatural virtue.

"The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up", had said the prophet In the Saviour of mankind, these words had found their fulfilment; in the lives of His servants, such as Bishop Grandin, they had been fulfilled, insofar as human nature can attain to the standard set by the Master: "Be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect." Zeal had ever and always been the motivating principle back of all his works and wanderings in the interests of souls to be saved.

Bishop Grandin's love for our Lord, more particularly for our Eucharistic Lord, had been a veritable obsession throughout his life. The tabernacle was the focal point of his existence. Before the hour set for the regular Oblate chapel exercises in the morning, he was kneeling before the altar of God. When evening came, and his brethren had gone to their rest, his prayers lasted far into the night. The Bishop's greatest trial was to be deprived of the consolation of saying mass during his extended trips to his missions, and also during his ever-recurring attacks of illness.

Bishop Grandin's love for the Mother of God is known to all who have the least knowledge of his admirable life. The Immaculate Heart of Mary he held in special veneration. It will be recalled that, on becoming

Bishop of St. Albert, his first concern was to consecrate to that Immaculate Heart all the hopes and the sorrows of the youngest diocese of the Far West. No doubt his devotion to the rosary was but a natural consequence to his love and veneration for the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God.

The saintly Bishop was a true lover of souls. Where they were concerned, so was he. For them he was always ready to forego that which he held most dear. The earnestness of the fur-traders in pursuit of gain spurred on his zeal for souls. "**They do not lose as mush as the tail of a wolf in these boundless prairies**", said he: "**someone is always there to salvage them. But what of souls? —souls created to the image of God—do they find but the casual one who is interested in them?**"

And what shall we say of the Bishop's love for the poor and unfortunate. Were they not always his children of predilection? And did not those who were treated unkindly by the world look up to him as their one and only friend here below? Is there a greater proof of his resemblance to Him who had said "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"?

Is there any need to ask whether Bishop **GRANDIN** loved his order, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, its superior-general, his fellow Oblates, and above all, the lay Brothers—"les apôtres inconnus", of whom Father Duchaussois writes in such touching terms? Anyone who will read his life, written by Father Jonquet, O.M.I., will have little doubt as to the answer. His joy was to be among his apostolic brothers. As their superior, he almost overwhelmed them with acts of kindness; lost no occasion to show how much he appreciated their de-

votedness; was all kindness towards those of them who were ill, never failing to visit them to cheer and console them—even going to the extent of singing for them. He was willing to do anything that would raise the souls of his fellow-labourers to the God whom they and be strove to serve.

But how did the "Saint of St. Albert" react towards his own family? His love for father, mother, sisters and brothers was that of any well-bred son. He had full confidence in the scriptural assurance of the blessings that are the reward of filial affection.

Is it surprising that one who had made charity his virtue of predilection should find solace in it at his hour of death. "**When one loves the good Lord, one does not fear death**", said he. And he added by way of moral : "To have loved and served God is all that matters, when the end of all comes."

As for himself, the treasures of love for God and his neighbor which, down through the years, he had amassed, were the price that was going to open wide for him the gates of eternity. Nevertheless, he begged for his soul the prayers of those whom he left behind "so that God might have mercy on him". "I feel", said he, "that if God deals with me according to his rigorous justice, all will not be well with me".

There are but two more points concerning the virtues of Bishop Grandin that we will mention here—though, in view of what has gone before, there is little need to refer to them. One is his great devotedness; the other is his spirit of forgiveness.

Anyone who has even a nodding acquaintance with the Oblates knows that they take devotedness as a mere

matter of course. Anything that helps, or that might help, the work of the missions is "all in a day's work" with them. There is never any question as to the number of hours one has worked, the need of relaxation or even priestly dignity. When it comes to helping on the work, the Oblate, be he priest of lay brother, will devote himself to the most menial task. This, perhaps, helps one to understand the marvelous growth and prosperity of the great works which they "created out of nothing" in these parts. That Bishop Grandin excelled in this, as well as in other "Oblate virtues" goes without saying. No task, however humble, ever seemed beneath his dignity as a priest or a bishop. So that photoprints representing Oblate priests or bishops building houses or sawing wood, or even fishing, are just scenes taken from the every-day life of Oblate missionaries.

With regard to forgiveness of injuries, it is almost a "faux-pas" to mention it in the life-sketch of a man such as Bishop **GRANDIN.** With him, the only vengeance he knew was of the "pouring-coals-of-fire" kind—rendering good for evil, after the example of the Master.

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THE BISHOP'S REPUTATION FOR SANCTITY

But the lives of great and small, of rich and poor of saints and sinners have to come to a term. The life of him who is the subject of this brief sketch closed peacefully and piously on the third day of June, 1902. It was according to the fitness of things that the end should come on the "holy hill of St. Albert". His burial was a strange blending of sorrow and joy: sorrow at

the loss of a father, friend and exemplar; joy at the thought that a powerful protector had, at last, taken up his place beside the throne of God.

Here in the Crypt, between the tombs of two great Oblates, Fathers Lacombe and Leduc, repose the sacred remains of Bishop Grandin.

Bishop **GRANDIN'S** reputation for holiness had been of long standing. His life through, unknown to him, he had been pointed to as possessing piety to a rare degree. His mother had noticed that he far surpassed his brothers and sisters in that respect. His fellow-students later reverenced him for his manly piety. As for the saintly founder of the great missionary society, whose pride the young Grandin would become one day, he both admired

and loved him, and thanked God that he had the privilege of conferring on him the sublime dignity of the episcopate. Bishop Grandin's subordinates looked upon him as a living saint. The lay brother, who had cared for him during his last illness once said: "It was my great privilege, and one of the greatest joys of my life, to have known **a saint** at such close proximity." The Indians, with characteristic simplicity, thought that the saintly Oblate could read the innermost secrets of their hearts. Perhaps he could. "O great Father", a Montagnais said to him one day, "surely the Great Spirit must be all kindness and goodness, since to come to us, he decided to come under the form of one as good as you."

Many and long were the letters written by Bishop Grandin. Let us glean from them some passages that only a saint could pen.—

> "From out our hearts let us say My God, may your holy will be done! But let us not add— mine also".
>
> "I know that God loves, above all others, the poor and the lowly."
>
> "He whom we serve does not make His awards according to the fashion of the world, which rewards only 'services rendered'. Our Master not only rewards that which we actually accomplish, but even that which we had wished to do."

* *

> "My God, I wish to die and to be with you— with you and your saints, the Blessed Mother, my holy Guardian Angel, my holy patrons, our Holy Founder, and so many other souls who await us.

"From the hand of God, I accept beforehand, both as to time and place, that kind of death which in His wisdom, it may please Him to send me. Whether it be suddenly, by accident or long-drawn-out illness; whether it be while travelling or at home, in the midst of my brother Oblates or far from every spiritual or material help, I cannot say that I am entirely indifferent to such circumstances, but I do say, and I do write, "ex toto corde", that I shall and I will accept it all from the holy hand of God. Beforehand, I repudiate all to the contrary that may be the outgrowth of physical or mental suffering. All I ask of God is that I may die in His holy love, and that He may judge me according to His infinite mercy". (Excerpt from his last will and testament).

* *

The question now arises: Was Bishop **GRANDIN** a **saint?** Only the Church of God can give an adequate answer May we not hope that one day she will answer—and in the affirmative? In the meantime, may we not say that the spiritual and temporal blessings, obtained through his intercession are an inducement to tried souls to ask of God, through the intercession of His great servant, Bishop Grandin, to obtain for them all those things that they may need, both for body and for soul.

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MAY ALL THOSE who have read these pages pray, with all their hearts to this blessed friend of God, so that new and greater blessings may accrue to them in answer to prayer! And may they allow us but one word of advice—If they wish to be heard, they should practice the virtues of which Bishop **Grandin** was such a shining example, not forgetting that to honour the saints, it is not enough to admire their virtues: one must imitate them.

To all who have helped prepare this pamphlet, and very particularly to Brother Memorian, F.S.C, Rector of St. Joseph's University College, to whom we owe the present text, we offer our hearty thanks.

To those who have read the foregoing

For all intentions that are specially recommended; for masses that people desire to have celebrated at the altar where the saintly Bishop of St. Albert daily said mass, or, again, for masses said in the "Crypt" where his sacred remains repose; for novenas, in which the Oblate community of St. Albert is expected to take part—the community that is the custodian of the remains of a same, by applying to the foregoing address, and including the postal fee, or to

Reverend Father Superior,
Oblate Mission House,
St. Albert, Alberta.

Persons who wish to get, or to distribute, this short monograph, or the indulgenced prayer with the photoprint of Bishop Grandin, will receive same, by applying to the foregoing address, or to

THE OBLATE FATHERS,
9916—110th Street,
Edmonton, Alberta.

Any contribution to help the furtherance of the Cause of the Servant of God will be gratefully received.

Those who obtain favours through the intercession of the Servant of God are kindly requested to inform The Oblate Fathers.